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General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

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94th plenary meeting
Monday, 15 June 2015, 4 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite members to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session should be elected from among the Western European and Other States. In that connection, the Chair of the Group of the Western European and Other States for the month of May 2015 informed the Secretariat that the group has endorsed His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, Speaker of the Parliament of Denmark, for the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of the Denmark elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session. On behalf of the Assembly, I wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Lykketoft on his election as President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session.

I now invite His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the seventieth session, to take the floor.

Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark): Since Denmark signed the Charter of the United Nations 70 years ago in San Francisco, we, the people of Denmark, have done our utmost to achieve the goals laid down in the Charter. We have had peacekeepers on active duty since the first United Nations mission in 1956, and we have for almost four decades delivered on the 0.7 commitment of official development assistance.

Allow me to thank the Assembly for having entrusted me and — for the first time — my country with presiding over its seventieth session. I will turn 70 myself during the seventieth session.

As a teenager 55 years ago, I walked into the offices of the United Nations Association in Copenhagen to collect information about the workings of the United Nations. Back then, I sincerely hoped that therein lay the framework in which rationality and humanity would prevail; that would make disarmament agreements possible; that could finally bring the major Powers to cooperate for a better future for the whole human race; that could assist peoples in attaining self-government and independence and, without racial prejudice, could protect the rights of minorities, vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, children, the displaced, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

Today, that hope and those objectives remain as relevant as ever. We will celebrate the seventieth

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anniversary of the United Nations throughout the session. I aim to organize our work in a way that allows us to reflect on the successes, as well as the shortcomings, in these first 70 years, while also looking to the future. The theme of my term as President will therefore be "The United Nations at 70 — a new commitment to action".

Since San Francisco, the Organization has gained in universal membership. In that timespan, the world's population has almost tripled to more than 7 billion people. The struggle to catalyse peaceful, sustainable development and combat climate change for all 7 billion is both the challenge and the opportunity of our lifetime. Fundamentally, a girl or a boy born today has the same right as 70 years ago to aspire to — in the words of the Charter — "social progress and a better standard of life in larger freedom" and to enjoy the equal rights of women and men in dignity. The key to success lies in identifying pathways for all countries to develop new ways and means to deliver on this aspiration, to produce and consume without undermining our common future for generations to come.

In order to succeed, we have to strive to build a more fair and stable world and we all have to play our part. The donor countries must deliver on their commitments to official development assistance. In a world where the 92 wealthiest dollar billionaires own more than the poorest half of humankind, all nations must strengthen resource mobilization efforts to meet development needs.

Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your guidance and vision and for focusing the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on delivering a transformative post-2015 development agenda. Over the past 15 years, the Millennium Development Goals have been a successful guide and framework for our joint efforts to reduce poverty, end hunger, bring children to school, combat diseases and maternal mortality to mention but a few achievements. What is now facing Member States is the final stretch towards adopting a universal, people-centred, transformative development agenda that addresses the struggle of our lifetime. When implemented, it will enable us to eradicate extreme poverty while keeping climate change at bay, building resilience and creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Personally, I look forward to collaborating closely with you, Mr President, as our two countries will jointly and symbolically co-chair the summit in September for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. A successful outcome will stand out as a historic achievement for the global sustainable development agenda and indeed beyond. I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his dedication to the United Nations and for his relentless focus on advancing the greater good of humankind.

My first priority will be to ensure that the summit is an occasion for world leaders to join hands to achieve the new goals in a new commitment to action, which is the theme that I have chosen for the seventieth session. That commitment — and the new global partnership that goes with it — will be at the core of driving the work of the United Nations until 2030. We will operationalize that theme by taking stock of the three pillars of the United Nations. Since the summit will focus on sustainable development, it would only be natural to dedicate this year's general debate to commemorating the United Nations at 70 and focus on the road ahead for peace, security and human rights.

The financing for development conference in Addis Ababa should provide the necessary boost and trust to mobilize substantial commitments and resources needed for years to come. Decision-makers at all levels should feel obliged to meet their commitments and feel accountable for doing so. The global public, civil society and business should also continue to engage and contribute beyond this conference. A successful and ambitious outcome from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris will be the first real test of these commitments to development in an environmentally sustainable manner, the first transformation of the new goals into action on a wider scale. We must not fail this test. The youth of today would suffer the consequences of our generation's inability to find common ground. I therefore firmly support your focus on climate change, Mr. President, and, if needed, I am ready to build on your efforts to promote its success in Paris.

It is a sad but ineluctable assessment that the world today suffers from armed conflict, terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, nuclear proliferation, as well as increasing risks of further tensions among major powers. In that context, the United Nations' effective and efficient contribution to international peace and security, which is the second of my overall priorities, of course, is more important than ever. It seems all too

apparent that only a world that demonstrates respect for the most fundamental human rights will be sufficiently harmonious, as well as socially and economically sustainable. Therefore my third priority is to support further progress in the field of human rights. Issues such as governance, rule of law, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women should all be considered as integral parts of obtaining and safekeeping progress in other fields of intervention, either peace- and security-related or developmental in nature.

With an overall focus on the United Nations at 70 and the implementation of the new universal agenda and the new commitment, I will convene a limited number of high-level events in 2016. In addition, it is my intention to organize a commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of the United Nations on Friday, 23 October. Cutting across the three priorities will be a firm emphasis on gender equality and youth, as well as creating and nurturing partnerships with civil society, the private sector and with other relevant stakeholders.

I also intend to organize high-level events in April, May and July respectively on the following themes: first, how to achieve the new sustainable development goals, targets and commitments; secondly, strengthening the role and coherence of the United Nations in peace and security, including creating synergies between the follow-up to the reviews on peace operations, peacebuilding and on women and peace and security; and thirdly, the implementation of human rights, governance, rule of law and gender aspects of the work of the United Nations. My goal is to seek pragmatic, action-oriented outcomes that provide guidance for all actors — the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and the private sector — on how to proceed with timely and effective implementation. Within this overall framework, and in support of these events, I will also convene a limited number of briefings, thematic debates and consultations with non-State actors.

In preparing for my election, my goal was to consult broadly with Member States. I have personally been enriched and moved by the discussions and the excellent advice I obtained there. I look forward to continuing our close cooperation during my tenure. Many have underscored their interests in seeing progress in the United Nations reform agenda and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Most interest seems to be centred on the reform of the Security Council and creating more transparency and openness when selecting the next Secretary-General. I will aim to continue this work based on the status in both tracks when the seventieth session begins. My intention is to conduct the presidency as transparently, inclusively and openly as possible.

At the same time, I will also aim to take a hands-on approach and be involved in coordinating the work of the General Assembly as it unfolds over the course of the seventieth session. This includes a 10-year review of progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in December, the United Nations budget and the two special sessions on world drug problems and HIV/AIDS in June next year. I intend to continue the tradition of coordinating closely with the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to ensure a seamless flow of information between the main bodies. In my engagement with the United Nations system, I will seek to ensure that the General Assembly is regularly briefed on how subsidiary bodies, as well as funds, agencies and programmes, are moving forward in implementing the outcomes of the major conferences held in 2015 in their work.

Today's decision-makers must acknowledge that 2015 is a time to make a new commitment to action for the sake of generations to come. That is the signal we should communicate from the seventieth session of the world's most representative, deliberative multilateral body. The interconnectedness and universality of the new sustainable development goals and the global complexities they reflect create unprecedented challenges and opportunities. We will have to find ways to achieve sustainable growth in which the distance between rich and poor nations and peoples does not become larger but smaller; in which we not only create development and eradicate extreme poverty, but also deliver a more equitable access to, and distribution of, global goods; and in which global cooperation creates a more fair, sustainable and stable world, as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations. Multilateralism and the work of the United Nations, the trust and hope in global solutions it inspires, is as needed today as it was when the United Nations was established, as it also was 55 years ago when, for the first time, I actually embraced the hopes and ideas of a stronger, more committed, more cooperative international community.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President-elect of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Speaker Lykketoft on his election by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Mr. Lykketoft brings a wealth of experience to this position. He is the current Speaker of the Parliament of Denmark and previously served as his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2001 and as Minister of Finance from 1993 to 2001. I am confident that these important leadership positions have equipped him well to lead this august body at its seventieth session.

The seventieth session will be historic. We will commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, adopt an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, and work towards a universal climate change agreement in December at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

With these important milestones approaching, we still have important preparatory work to do at the current session, in particular the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next month in Addis Ababa. These negotiations have now reached a critical stage, and we must redouble our efforts to ensure successful outcomes.

I would like to congratulate Speaker Lykketoft on his choice of theme for the seventieth session, "The United Nations at 70 — a new commitment to action". Once again, I congratulate him on his election and have confidence that he will be an able steward of the work of this body. I look forward to supporting him over the coming months as he prepares to assume his responsibilities as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to offer my warmest congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President-elect of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. This is well-deserved recognition of Denmark's important role on the international stage, and it is a testimony to Mr. Lykketoft's personal strength.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the current President, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa. I am most grateful for our fruitful collaboration in relation to a number of historic events. We gathered religious leaders from around the world in April for our high-level thematic debate on promoting tolerance and reconciliation, and we shared the meaningful chance to unveil the historic permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. I thank him for his leadership and commitment.

This election is an annual event on the United Nations calendar, but this year offers an extraordinary opportunity to shape history. In 2015, we will reach our target date for the Millennium Development Goals, the largest campaign against poverty in history, and will hold the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, our new vision for sustainable development, which will guide the world for the next 15 years.

We could not have a better leader than Mr. Lykketoft. He is an accomplished economist with decades of experience in his country's Parliament. As a former Minister of Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs, he brings great understanding of the major challenges of our times. He has a background of outstanding commitment to development. I commend Denmark for its long record of meeting and surpassing the United Nations development assistance target, and I applaud Mr. Lykketoft for the fact that when he was Minister of Finance, Denmark dramatically exceeded that target to help even more people struggling against poverty. I have had many in-depth discussions with him, and I especially appreciated meeting him almost two years ago in his office in Copenhagen. At that time, he took me on a tour of the Danish Parliament; now, he will preside over the General Assembly, our parliament of humanity.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. At this session, our new President will turn 70. I count on him to celebrate these milestones with an even stronger commitment to multilateralism, international cooperation and global solidarity. He has chosen an inspiring theme: "The United Nations at 70 — a new commitment to action". Together, we can ensure that the United Nations achieves its historic ambitions for this year and helps secure the long-term future of our world.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): Allow me, Mr. President, to thank you on behalf of the Group of African States for your exceptional leadership and achievements at the current session of the General Assembly, while at the same time congratulating His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on his election as President of the Assembly at its seventieth session. It is our hope that the progress being made at the current session under your exceptional leadership will help Mr. Lykketoft's tenure to be dynamic and its effects far-reaching, given the pressing issues ahead.

The current session has been a demanding one, in which the General Assembly has sought to transition from the Millennium Development Goals to sustainable development goals while advancing the work of the United Nations in critical areas, including environmental and social development and security. The African Group is also grateful that under your leadership, Sir, many efforts have also been dedicated to revitalizing the work of the Assembly. Those efforts include forging a closer working relationship with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, while at the same time promoting greater synergies and cooperation between regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union. Indeed, the African continent is very proud of you, Sir, as one of its greatest sons, for serving with distinction amid those pressing issues of international concern.

As we move towards the seventieth session, the Organization is celebrating the seventieth anniversary of its efforts to build a more caring world — one in which future generations will be free from the ravages of war and underdevelopment. While under your leadership, Sir the Organization has done a lot, today the promises of 70 years ago do not appear to have substantially materialized.

The African Group believes that it is also high time for the Organization, through self-reflection, to build on the momentum and energy you have created and to move beyond business as usual in order to make its work more relevant, effective and better suited to its purpose. Achieving that, however, depends on the participation and cooperation of all Members, big or small, developed and developing, in a spirit of mutual understanding, dialogue and tolerance. As we move towards the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the African Group will pursue broadened consultations with the office of the President-elect to continue the work that is underway to make that agenda truly universal and sustainable.

We will also continue to deploy efforts to revitalize the Organization and work with other regional groupings to advocate for Security Council reform, in order for the Organization to live up to its expectations, including openness, fairness, accountability and representation. As we move ahead, pressing priorities include the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, taking into account the recommendations of the ongoing review of peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture, as well as the follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

To conclude, we are confident that the President-elect, with his high-level expertise and experience, which ranges from his role as a parliamentarian to his work as minister of finance and foreign affairs, will facilitate the way forward.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Bahrain, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain): I have the honour and privilege to address the Assembly on behalf of the States members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. Mr. Lykketoft is poised to take over the helm of the Assembly at the momentous time when we celebrate 70 years in the life of this important governing body and when we have pledged in common to adopt a sustainable and enhanced post-2015 development agenda. We shall fully support Mr. Lykketoft in his resolve to address the main challenges facing humanity today, notably climate change, global poverty and gender disparity, among others.

While we push forward in implementing that ambitious development agenda, we are confident that Mr. Lykketoft's experience and leadership represent a major asset for the work of this body as he takes over from Mr. Sam Kutesa, who has very ably led the General

Assembly during its sixty-ninth session, On behalf of the Asia and Pacific Group, I would like to thank Mr. Kutesa for undertaking a very ambitious workload during his presidency. The Asia-Pacific group extends its since wishes to Mr. Kutesa for continued success in his future endeavours.

We have a complex yet optimistic agenda as the United Nations leads the global initiative aimed at making our world a better place. We hope that Mr. Lykketoft and his office will be provided with all the resources necessary to successfully cope with the responsibilities of the General Assembly/ For its part, the Asia and Pacific Group reiterates its commitment to continue its cooperation with the Office of the President of the General Assembly and we wish him the best of luck.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Winid (Poland): I have the honour and pleasure, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. Mr. Lykketoft brings to this important position very rich experience gained during his distinguished career in the Danish Government and, in recent years, as Speaker of the Danish Parliament. We strongly believe that he will make a significant contribution to the success of the upcoming session of the General Assembly, which will be of particular importance.

On behalf of the Eastern European Group, I would like to express our gratitude to President Sam Kutesa for his remarkable efforts during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Over the past months, Mr. Kutesa has led the complex work of this body in an excellent manner, focusing first of all on the post-2015 development agenda. As we enter the final stage of preparations for the September summit on the new development agenda and the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, the leadership of the President of the General Assembly will remain of crucial importance. We hope that his highly beneficial engagement with the United Nations will continue in the future, and we wish him all the best in all his future endeavours.

Let me conclude by confirming the full support of the States members of the Group of Eastern European States for the newly elected President of the General Assembly, Mr. Lykketoft, during his upcoming tenure. We wish him success in fulfilling this demanding mandate.

The President: I now the give the floor to the representative of Panama, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), I have the honour to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. Mr. Lykketoft represents a country, Denmark, with a number of values in common with GRULAC member States, including multilateralism, dialogue among nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and full respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to name but a few.

Mr. Lykketoft enters the presidency during a critical transitional period, as well as a historic year. The implementation of the post-2015 development agenda will make the seventieth session of the General Assembly of exceptional importance for the United Nations and the global community that we represent. Under Mr. Lykketoft's lead, the General Assembly will make decisions concerning the new global development framework, replacing the current goals and focusing on poverty eradication, social and economic development, women's empowerment and environmental protection. Another pivotal undertaking for the General Assembly under Mr. Lykketoft's guidance will be continuing the revitalization process in order to ensure the Assembly's central position as the chief deliberative policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as well as its role in the process of standard setting and codification of international law.

I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of GRULAC, to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on the excellent work that he has done today and wish him well in the next few months of his continuing presidency. We are confident that Mr. Lykketoft's extensive diplomatic background and accomplished career will contribute enormously to the work of the General Assembly during its seventieth session, and we appreciate his willingness to take on this role. On behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, I would like to pledge our full support to our new President-elect during his tenure

and wish him every success in carrying out his duties during the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. As Speaker of the Danish Parliament, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of Finance and Minister of Taxation, Mr. Lykketoft will bring valuable expertise and wisdom from which the General Assembly could benefit during its seventieth anniversary.

During his extensive career as minister and parliamentarian, Mr. Lykketoft has been trusted and respected in domestic politics and internationally. He is deeply familiar with the work and nature of deliberative bodies, and will be well suited to the task of facilitating full and inclusive dialogue while ensuring the efficient conduct of Assembly affairs. Mr. Lykketoft is a visionary leader and strong supporter of the multilateral system and cooperation among nations. He has high regard for the United Nations role in the global arena, and we know that he will guide the General Assembly firmly and wisely. We wish the President-elect every success in doing in so, and he can rely on the full support of the Western European and other States Group.

In this connection, I would also like to express to you, Mr. President, our deep appreciation for the commitment and dedication that you have demonstrated during the current session of the General Assembly. We thank you for your personal leadership and look forward to working with you during the remaining months of your term of office as the United Nations and its Member States prepare to adopt an ambitious agenda of reform for the seventieth General Assembly and the future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, as the host country of the United Nations, I have the honour of warmly welcoming the election of His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft as President of the General Assembly at its historic seventieth session. My Government appreciates the fact that the President-elect is willing to take on this important role in what is sure to be a momentous year for the General Assembly and the United Nations as we mark the occasion of 70 years of our collective commitment to peace, development and security around the world.

As president of the Parliament of Denmark since 2011 and as former Foreign Minister of Denmark, the President-elect brings a unique perspective and record of leadership to this position. My delegation looks forward to working with him on an ambitious agenda that includes the post-2015 development agenda, peacekeeping reform, scales of assessment, countering violent extremism, gender equality and the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society, and energy and climate change.

My delegation welcomes the President-elect's statement of priorities for the next session, including the Assembly's vital work on sustainable development, and wishes him every success in carrying out his duties in the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The United States, of course, also wishes to take this occasion to express its thanks to you, Mr. President, on your dedicated service as President of the General Assembly's sixty-ninth session.

The President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the seventieth regular session

The President: As announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventieth session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the States members of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name is drawn will occupy the first seat of the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in the English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by a lot by the Secretary-General, Tuvalu was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the seventieth session.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for the drawing of the lots.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.